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Amnesia

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Amnesia

Wakening late, and light blazed yellow
through curtains and down the pine floorboards
that led from the window to the rush-bottom chair

beside the bed—not a Van Gogh yellow
for I had no Van Gogh anywhere in mind
nor even yellow. The lips formed

by the creases in the sheet were not lips, creases,
or sheet. Each thing surveyed nothing
like anything else, yet everything itself,

exactly, though I had no idea of words.
The stained-glass light blinked several times
blinded by a rising or setting bird

as I can say now but would have been just then
unable to say, calmly unable even
to recover my name or make the room my room

or the body in the bed me, infant, Adam,
clown, anyone who by definition
did not know the use of anything

and might bring sheet to mouth or paw at dust-motes.
As it happened, I only looked, my whole face
feeling as if it were an open eye.

For some minutes, whosoever I was was
breathing in the original light of wakening,
from the belly like a singer: in, quick

as delight, and out—a slow stream that tumbled
from sibilance to something like speech,
and when I knew I had laughed, and thought of it

as the call of a late-dreamer under a sun
high enough to reach over garden trees,
no answer to anything else in creation he'd name,

not the pluck of a nerve, but there in the voice
as a kind of proof that beneath sad facts to come
to say in time was a laugh like a given note

of the earliest music of the animal
who speaks and will remember—I, by then, had
of course already long returned to myself.

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